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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2893
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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1242
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3283
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2669
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000155

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SUBJECT: EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGES KYRGYZ ON MANAS

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Classified By: Amb. Tatiana Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: EU Special Representative Pierre Morel briefed the Ambassador on his February 20 outreach to Kyrgyz officials in which he cautioned them on the damage Kyrgyz plans to close Manas Air Base would have on relations with EU member states. FM Sarbayev told Morel that no one is being "kicked out," and suggested that the Kyrgyz are ready to negotiate with the United States. Two prominent political observers advised Morel that an expected autumn 2009 Presidential reelection campaign was the driving factor, above monetary concerns and Russian pressure, in President Bakiyev's call for Manas Air Base's closure. Hoping that closure of an "unpopular" base would resurrect President Bakiyev's public standing, the Kyrgyz White House is also reportedly trying to identify two more Presidential candidates in order to divide the opposition and secure Bakiyev's reelection. Morel also recounted that the late January visit of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sechin firmed up Kyrgyz plans on Manas Air Base, and said that Sechin told the Kyrgyz Russia would help the United States with transit of goods through its territory in exchange for closure of Manas Air Base. End summary.

Stressing Impact on Relations with EU

¶2. (C) European Union Special Representative for Central Asia Pierre Morel briefed the Ambassador about his separate February 20 meetings with Kyrgyz Prime Minister Igor Chudinov, Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev, and Parliamentary Speaker Aitibai Tagayev in which he expressed European Union (EU) concern regarding Manas Air Base developments. Morel recounted three points he raised in his meetings: 1) EU member states have not been officially notified of Kyrgyz plans regarding Manas; 2) there is a strong linkage between U.S. operations and those of French and Spanish forces at Manas; and 3) how would the Kyrgyz Republic contribute to efforts in Afghanistan in the future if Manas closes?

13. (C) While Chudinov and Tagayev listened politely and offered little feedback, Sarbayev attempted to blame Kyrgyz "inefficiency" for the lack of contact with EU countries that also utilize Manas Air Base. Sarbayev reportedly added, "We are not kicking anyone out of Manas; we are open to negotiations." Morel retorted that the Kyrgyz are taking the wrong approach and questioned their negotiating style. He noted the impact on overflights in the region, and cautioned all three interlocutors about the damage Kyrgyz closure of Manas would have on current and future relations with EU and other states that rely on Manas Air Base. Morel further questioned how the Kyrgyz Republic planned to support ISAF operations in Afghanistan if Manas were closed and wondered if the Kyrgyz Republic would be "dropping out" of international efforts on Afghanistan. He concluded to his interlocutors that Kyrgyz actions on Manas were "unhelpful."

Presidential Politics

14. (C) Morel later sounded out Presidential Advisor Muratbek Imanaliyev (who heads a prominent think tank) and political scientist Nur Omarov. While both Imanaliyev and Omarov cited monetary demands and Russian pressure as reasons for Kyrgyz actions on Manas, they identified domestic politics as the critical factor. Manas Air Base, they claimed, is extremely unpopular in the Kyrgyz Republic, and concluded that President Bakiyev had ordered the Base's closure to restore his ratings. Both expected Presidential elections this autumn, and related that meetings were taking place within the Presidential Administration to identify two additional candidates to run in the first round of the Presidential election. They said the Administration planned to support

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two candidates, currently identified as former Prime Minister Almaz Atambayev and former Human Rights Ombudsman Tursunbay Bakir Uluu, to run against President Bakiyev in order to divide the opposition's vote. Then, they explained, President Bakiyev would win reelection in the second round of voting.

Other Political and Family Matters

15. (C) According to Morel, Imanaliyev returned to the February 19 Parliamentary vote on renouncing the Manas Air Base agreement with the United States, and said that all members of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) had previously vowed to vote against the legislation. Instead, all SDPK members, except Bakyt Beshimov (who provided the only vote against the bill), changed their minds by voting for the bill, abstaining or not voting out of concern about political retribution.

16. (C) Imanaliyev also claimed that Maxim Bakiyev, President Bakiyev's business-minded son, is against closing Manas due to his reported receipt of kickbacks from Base contractors. Maxim Bakiyev has reportedly argued about Manas with his father, but is losing ground due to the countervailing arguments of President Bakiyev's security-minded brother, Janysh. (Note. This version partially contradicts other information we have heard, reported septel, that Maxim is opposed to the Base, unless the price is right. End Note.)

From Russia with Attitude

17. (C) Morel told the Ambassador that the January 28 visit of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin had concentrated Kyrgyz minds on closing Manas Air Base. Sechin reportedly advised his Kyrgyz interlocutors that Russia would assist U.S. efforts in Afghanistan by allowing transit of goods through Russian territory in exchange for the United States departing Manas Air Base. Imanaliyev observed that there were disagreements within the Russian government over the

U.S. mission in Afghanistan, and suggested that Russian FM Lavrov was taking a softer line and arguing that the United States was doing Russia's work in Afghanistan.

Comment

18. (C) While we cannot directly corroborate Morel's reporting, his feedback, in many respects, reflects similar comments we have received from other sources. Most importantly, he was told that the Kyrgyz are waiting for a U.S. offer on Manas Air Base. Imanaliyev and Omorov are both well-versed in Kyrgyz politics, and their version of the domestic political nature of the Kyrgyz White House's actions, coupled with other information we are receiving about President Bakiyev's intentions to run for reelection, while not definitive do provide additional rationale for the Kyrgyz approach on the Base issue.
GFOELLER